

Patient information

Improving Sleep Patterns

Occupational Therapy/Therapies Department

Sleep is not only a period of rest during our waking lives but is needed to keep our bodies and minds functioning smoothly. The quality and quantity of sleep we receive impacts on our health, relationships, and work. Poor sleeping patterns are known to be a common problem within our society and can be further disrupted by pain. Most adults require at least seven and a half to eight hours sleep a night.

Below is some advice that may help you to improve your sleep patterns:

- Develop a sleep cycle. Try to get up and go to bed at a similar time every day, even on weekends. This will help to train your 'biological clock' and help you to sleep better and be more alert when awake.
- Exposure to daylight at the start of the day helps to regulate your biological clock. Try, if possible, to go for a short walk in the mornings.
- Do not go to bed before you are tired. If you go to bed and can't sleep, get up and do something that you find relaxing until you feel tired and then go back to bed.
- Avoid naps during the daytime. This will ensure that you are tired at bedtime. If you do need to go to bed during the day, go at lunch time and set an alarm.
- Regular moderate exercise can help to deepen sleep. However, avoid exercise within two to four hours of going to bed as this will affect sleep.
- Avoid stimulants, such as caffeine (in coffee, tea, chocolate) or nicotine smoking four to six hours before bedtime as these will prevent quality deep sleep.
- Avoid using devices before bedtime, leaving up to 60 to 90 minutes device free before you intend to go to sleep.
- Avoid excess alcohol four to six hours before bedtime. Although alcohol has an immediate sleep-inducing effect, it will later lead to broken sleep patterns.
- Drink herbal tea or hot milky drinks instead. These will help you to relax rather than stimulate you before bedtime.
- Avoid large meals or large fluid intake late at night, as this could cause poor sleep due to indigestion, heart burn or frequent awakenings to go to the toilet.

Ensure your bedroom is comfortable (for example)

- Dark, unless you are reassured by having a night light on.
- Comfortable temperature, a room that is too hot or cold can interfere with sleep.
- Block out all distracting noise; wear ear plugs if noise bothers you.
- Comfortable bedding, ensure your mattress is adequately firm and comfortable, the same applies for pillows.

Bedtime routine

- Take plenty of time to get ready for bed, giving you time to relax and wind down before bedtime.
- Have a hot shower or bath before bedtime. This will help you to relax and wind down before going to bed.
- Tranquil music designed to help relaxation and sleep could be used. This is a good alternative to watching television in bed as it is less stimulating and will therefore not affect your ability to get to sleep.
- Do not allow yourself to lie in bed worrying. If necessary, set aside time before bed to write down anything that is worrying you or what you need to do. This will then leave your mind free to relax and you can deal with the list in the morning.
- Improving your posture in bed can be helpful. Identify which joints are hurting; careful placement of pillows can sometimes help.
- Improving sleep habits requires patience, you may not see an improvement immediately. Take your time to implement a few of the above suggestions at a time.
- If pain is keeping you awake at night discuss your medication with your family doctor (GP). Sometimes adjusting the time, you take your painkillers/anti-inflammatory medication can help.
- If you have prolonged poor sleep and are struggling to cope during the day discuss this with your GP, sleeping tablets may be an option to restore your sleep cycle.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Rheumatology Occupational Therapy

My Sleep Routine

The sleep problem I have is _____

How can I improve this? _____

How can I measure/ know if my sleep has improved _____

Is this achievable? _____

Is this realistic? _____

How much time should I give for this change in my sleep pattern to occur? _____

Further information

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<https://sleepcouncil.org.uk>

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Review date: June 2027

All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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